(b) the main criteria followed for installation of PCOs; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to install more PCOs in the State of Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) The number of PCOs functioning in the country are 468833 as on 30.10.1998. The details of PCOs working in North-East Region, Telecom District-wise are given in the enclosed Statement (*See* below).

(b) STD PCOs are allotted to educated unemployed persons having minimum qualifications of 10th pass for urban areas and 8th pass in rural areas. These are allotted on seniority basis by STD PCOs allotment committee constituted one for each Secondary Switching Area (SSA) comprising of two official members and one representative each of sitting Members of Parliament from the SSA. Preference is given to the following categories of persons:

1. Handicapped including blind persons.
2. SC/ST Applicants.
3. Ex-Servicemen & War Widows.
4. Retired DOT employees or their dependents.
5. Dependents of Freedom Fighters.
6. Charitable Institutions/Hospitals.

(c) A target of 2000 PCOs has been fixed for the year 1998-99.

Statement

PCOs Working in North-East Region

Sl. No.	Name of Telecom District	No. of PCOs
1.	Kamrup	2019
2.	Tezpur	472
3.	Sibsagar	606
4.	Dibrugarh	516
5.	Silchar	428
6.	Nagaon	331
7.	Bongaigaon	343
8.	Arunachal Pradesh	611
9.	Manipur	703
10.	Meghalya	522
11.	Mizoram	452
12.	Nagaland	537
13.	Tripura	585

Waiting List for Telephones

1289. SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of persons that have been waiting for telephone connections for the last six months in the country, district-wise and State-wise;

(b) by when the wait-list/backlog will be cleared;

(c) the number of villages that are there is in the country where telephone facility is not available;

(d) whether the Department of Telecommunications are taking any steps to provide telephone facility in these villages; and

(e) by when this will be achieved?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be placed on the table of the House.

(c) to (e) As on 30.11.98, there were 295704 villages were telephone facility was not available. Steps are being taken to make the facility available in all the villages by the end of 9th Five Year Plan period subject to availability of adequate resources.

Ban on Entry of SAS Agents in Post Offices

1290. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state: